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## Consul Defecting to Britain Called Key Soviet Spy

*From Times Wire Services*

LONDON—A Soviet diplomat who defected to the West in Iran and is now in Britain has been a top spy for the Kremlin, the Daily Mail newspaper reported Saturday.

Vladimir Kuzichkin, 35, had been a vice consul in the Soviet Union's Tehran embassy. His defection is "the biggest spy scoop" since the British government expelled 105 Soviet officials for spying 11 years ago, saying its evidence came from Oleg Laylin, a KGB intelligence agent who defected to the West, the newspaper said.

The British Home Office an-

nounced late Friday that Kuzichkin has arrived in Britain and has been granted permission to stay.

The Home Office did not comment on Kuzichkin's importance as a Soviet spy, but an official source implied that his defection is an important coup for British intelligence.

"This is not an ordinary run-of-the-mill affair. He is one of the most significant to come our way in quite a while," the source said.

Diplomatic sources said that Kuzichkin is married but that his wife did not defect with him. He arrived in Britain recently, although he disappeared from his post as vice consul in Tehran last June, the sources said.

The wording by the Home Office spokesman suggests that the Soviet diplomat has not formally been granted political asylum. The spokesman declined to elaborate on the statement that Kuzichkin has been "granted permission to stay."

Diplomatic sources said this may be because Kuzichkin has not yet asked for asylum.

Asylum is not automatically

granted, and there have been several cases of applications being turned down.

Diplomats at the Soviet Embassy in London declined comment.

British press reports said that the Soviets have requested consular access to Kuzichkin and that the request has been passed on to him by British authorities.

The Daily Mail quoted an unnamed British intelligence officer as saying that Kuzichkin is "top of his class in the KGB."

The Guardian, highly respected British newspaper, said that Kuzichkin is being questioned intensively by British intelligence officers at his hiding place near London. It said that his work in Tehran was to maintain close relations with Iran's Tudeh (Communist) Party, forced underground by the current anti-Communist regime.

The tabloid Daily Express said that Kuzichkin has "detailed knowledge of his country's spy network in the Middle East" and that British intelligence officers are elated by his defection.

The Daily Mail said that U.S. intelligence officers have arrived to London to question Kuzichkin after he has been debriefed by British intelligence and added that he brought with him "a vast dossier on the Soviet espionage network in Western Europe and the Near East—agents, subagents, code systems and all."

The Daily Mail said that the Soviet defector asked his wife to come with him but that she remained in Tehran.

The Times of London quoted Tehran sources as saying that Kuzichkin disappeared from the Soviet Embassy there last June but that it was unclear where he has been since then. The newspaper's sources said his car was found abandoned in a Tehran street.